

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 02941 151315Z

44

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-10 DPW-01 NEA-09 EUR-12 /093 W

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R 150946Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3693

USDEL JEC PARIS

INFO AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS PINT MOPS VN VS

SUBJECT: AFP REPORT ON BAN ME THUOT FIGHTING

REF: JEC PARIS 06452 (NOTAL)

1. AFP REPORT OF COMMENT BY VIETNAMESE PRIEST WHO ESCAPED FROM BAN ME THUOT TO THE EFFECT THAT VIET CONG TROOPS AND MONTAGNARDS OF THE

FULRO MOBEMEOT CARRIED OUT INITIAL ATTACK ON THE CITY GIVES A COMPLETELY FALSE IMPRESSION OF THE TRUE NATURE OF THE FORCE THAT ATTACKED BAN ME THUOT. STORY SEEMS TO IMPLY THAT ATTACK MOUNTED BY LOCAL GUERRILLA UNITS AND DISSIDENT MONTAGNARDS SUPPORTED BY A FEW TANKS. THE TRUE FACTS ARE THAT THE ATTACK WAS PLANNED AND EXECUTED BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY SPECIFICALLY THE 320TH AND 316TH NORTH VIETNAMESE DIVISIONS ALONG WITH NVA ARMOR (PROBABLY A BN) HEAVY ARTILLERY, AND ANTI AIRCRAFT UNITS. PRISONERS IN NVA UNIFORMS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED AND WHO HAVE ATTESTED TO THE PARTICIPATION OF THE NVA UNITS.

2. A PROVINCIAL COMMUNIST SAPPER BN HAS ALSO BEEN IDENTIFIED AS PARTICIPATING IN THE ATTACK ON THE CITY. THIS BN HAS TRADITIONALLY HAD MONTAGNARDS IN IT AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE PRIEST SAW ELE-

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PAGE 02 SAIGON 02941 151315Z

MENTS OF THIS UNIT. AS FOR THE MONTAGNARDS OF THE FULRO MOVEMENT,

WE ARE AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN HOW PRIEST MADE THIS DETERMINATION
SINCE FULRO WAS FORMALLY DISSOLVED IN 1969.

3. WE WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT THE TERMS VIET CONG AND LOCAL
FORCE UNITS HAVE LITTLE APPLICATION IN TODAY'S VIETNAM. ALTHOUGH
THERE ARE SOME SO-CALLED VC UNITS REMAINING, PARTICULARLY IN THE
DELTA, THESE UNITS ARE HEAVILY BUTTRESSED WITH NVA REGULARS. THE
WAR IN SOUTH VIETNAM IS NOT A GUERRILLA WAR, IT IS A LARGELY
CONVENTIAONAL WAR DIRECTED FROM NORTH VIETNAM AND WAGED BY NORTH
VIETNAMESE TROOPS WITH SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY SUPPLIED BY
COMMUNIST BLOC NATIONS. THE SO-CALLED VC PLAY A VERY MINOR
ROLE IN THE WAR.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SAIGON02941
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750091-0572
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750347/aaaabqav.tel
Line Count: 74
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 JEC PARIS 06452
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 MAY 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <15 MAY 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AFP REPORT ON BAN ME THUOT FIGHTING
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MOPS, VN, VS
To: STATE JEC PARIS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006